

## **Testimony Concerning SB 253**

**Robin A.F. Olson  
Kitten Associates, Inc.**

I would like to thank the Environmental Committee for the opportunity to express my concerns on SB253, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Animal Importation Statutes

I am a registered voter in Newtown, CT and am the President & Founder of Kitten Associates, Inc., a cat rescue group saving the lives of "at risk" cats from Kill Shelters or from the perils of life on the street. I've been involved in cat rescue for over 10 years and am a passionate advocate for the welfare of cats and have personally helped over 250 cats find appropriate, loving homes.

I run a volunteer staffed Non-Profit Corporation. With donations down, volunteers hard to find and fewer adoptions due to the lackluster economy, the current Importation Law requires excessive, expensive, vet visits which burden an already struggling organization. EVERY animal imported into this state has already just been examined and issued a Health Certificate within 10 days prior to the animal's arriving, why have to add more exams soon after it arrives? Once a cat arrives in the state, the added stress of having to take it to be examined by a Vet within the first week of arrival could actually CAUSE the cat to become ill. Cats are not like dogs, they are VERY sensitive to stressors and going for a ride in the car and being at a Vet are big stressors that could sicken them.

Requiring additional unnecessary exams every 90 days is another serious drain on a rescue's finances, time and on their animals. I recently had a foster cat for 14 months. To comply with the law, she would have had to be examined for no good reason, FOUR TIMES at about \$100.00 per visit! Meanwhile, there are NO restrictions on Veterinarians costs for these types of exams! It can quickly become too costly to help any animal outside of this state's borders. I can't raise adoption fees to cover these costs or adoptions would be \$500.00 or more per cat!

Add to all these exams, an additional Vet exam no more than 15 days prior to adoption, just adds further complications and costs that are going to break the backs of small rescues like mine—forcing us to close down.

I suggest that only ONE Vet exam be required prior to the animal being adopted, once it arrives in the State of Connecticut, unless it becomes ill or injured in foster care or at the shelter. If rescues have to bear the financial burden of multiple exams, then Veterinarians have to be required to hold their costs and uniformly charge ONE reduced fee for this type of exam and to issue a CT Health Certificate.

When our cats get adopted, they're seen by CONNECTICUT Veterinarians for the rest of their lives. The Vets are going to lose a lot of potential business if they don't make some accommodations to rescue groups if we must continue with these excessive examinations.

My Vet currently charges \$92.00 PER exam and to issue a Health Certificate—which is an outrageous cost considering that all he does is look at the cat, take it's temperature, weigh it, listen to it's heart and lungs and look in it's ears and mouth. I rescue KITTENS so multiply that cost by 4 or 6 or more for

every visit. I can't afford to rescue more kittens now!

Lastly, the Bill does not define at what point in time an animal imported into Connecticut becomes a "*Connecticut Animal*." It is almost assumed it is at the point of adoption, but what if the animal is with a rescue for months or longer? There must be a point at which a transported animal becomes a CT animal and no longer has to have numerous Vet exams. Perhaps that point is when the one and only CT Health Certificate is issued (per my suggestion)?

You might ask why import cats? There are plenty of cats already in Connecticut who need homes and there are many times when we reach out and help those cats, but there is a horrendous situation going on south of our border and just because we may be defined by longitude and latitude marks should not define why we can't help our neighbor. All the cats I bring into Connecticut need food, toys, litter, etc. All those purchases help the local economy. It's a win for our businesses to help keep rescues like mine, afloat.

In the southern United States there is rampant cat overpopulation and flagrant disregard for spaying or neutering pets. Local animal control facilities are forced to euthanize animals, at least every week, if not more often. The number of perfectly adoptable cats who are euthanized due to space issues in ONE municipal animal control I work with is 98%. It adds up to over 350 cats PER MONTH, or 4200 per year, who are killed in this ONE animal pound. Most cats enter the pound never come out alive. They have a few days to find a forever home and if they don't, their heart is punctured with a stick, allowing them to die in agony, or they're suffocated in a gas chamber, or euthanized via an injection—for those who are "lucky" enough to die this way.

This includes euthanizing KITTENS who can be as young as just days old; KITTENS who can easily be adopted if they lived in Connecticut.

I help southern cats like Bobette, a slender orange tabby with luminous green eyes, who was barely year old when she gave birth to six tiny kittens. She was dumped at a shelter, too young and too weak to survive for long. She didn't eat for four days. Her kittens grew more frail. On the fourth day, with no rescue in sight and fears that Bobette might be seriously ill, she and her family were scheduled to be euthanized. I couldn't let that happen.

No one realized that Bobette had been hit by a car. Her back leg was deformed. She was in so much pain she'd stopped eating. We quickly arranged for her to get the care she needed because we had the funds to do so. If I'd been required to pay for extra Vet visits for the cats I'd already transported to Connecticut, we would not have been able to save her life or her kittens.

Even though we got Bobette's family into local foster care, we were too late for three of Bobette's kittens. They died a few days after rescue. Losing vital nutrients for so long was too much on their frail bodies to survive. The remaining kittens, three orange tabby boys, began to stabilize. In time, their eyes opened and they took their first wobbly steps. Bobette, now pain free could care for her kittens. In foster care, she gained FOUR POUNDS, doubling her four pound body weight to that of a healthy sized cat. She had corrective surgery and follow up examinations here in Connecticut, which helped our

economy. Now she's waiting for her forever home while her boys are enjoying life with their new Connecticut families.

With respect and great sincerity, **I strongly urge you to make the necessary changes to this bill, to alleviate the serious financial burden on rescue groups like mine. We're not importing animals into Connecticut to make a buck—we're saving lives, helping the local economy and enriching the lives of the families of this great state.**

Respectfully submitted,

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